

OPERATION THRESHOLD

PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES REPORT FOR THE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM

STATE FISCAL YEAR 2021

PREPARED BY

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INTRODUCTION

Iowa's Family Development and Self-Sufficiency Program (FaDSS) was created by the 1988 General Assembly to assist Family Investment Program (FIP) families with significant or multiple barriers reach self-sufficiency. FaDSS provides services that promote, empower, and nurture families toward economic self-sufficiency and family stability.

Participation in FaDSS is a voluntary option for families participating in the Family Investment Program (FIP). Eligible families are identified and referred to the program primarily by Iowa Workforce Development's PROMISE JOBS program. However, referrals to FaDSS may also originate with the Department of Human Services, other social service providers, or as self-referrals. Beginning in July 2019, FaDSS began serving families who are not mandated to participate in the PROMISE JOBS program.

The program is provided to families in Black Hawk, Buchanan and Grundy counties through a partnership with Operation Threshold.

Utilizing a strengths-based approach, the program is delivered to families through home visits with certified Family Development Specialists. Core services include assessment and screening, family-driven goal setting, referrals to community resources and supports, and advocacy and self-empowerment.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The FaDSS program is committed to providing high quality, effective services for families. To that end, program leadership meet each quarter to review performance on select contract measures and family outcomes with the goal of identifying 1) areas where the program is achieving desired results and 2) opportunities to implement responsive changes to practice to ensure the program is on track to meet year-end targets. This report provides an overview of the performance and outcomes data reviewed for each quarter. Statewide performance data is provided where appropriate for comparison purposes. All data provided in this report should be interpreted in light of unique program considerations as well as community factors that may impact performance and outcome measures.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The Iowa Department of Human Rights, in partnership with Operation Threshold, gathers a wealth of data related to program performance and self-sufficiency outcomes for families. Information about participants is collected by Family Development Specialists using the Self-Sufficiency Matrix, a tool that measures changes in 14 life domains. Demographic characteristics and information about the specific activities and services completed with families are also gathered. Together, this information allows the FaDSS program to:

- Understand family characteristics, including assets and barriers to self-sufficiency;
- Assess changes in family self-sufficiency and stability domains over the course of enrollment;
- Build upon program success and consider areas for further focus.

A NOTE ON THE DATA PRESENTED

In March of 2020, the State of Iowa declared an emergency public health disaster due to COVID-19. As a result, the FaDSS program implemented a series of rapid-response adjustments to ensure the safety of all staff and families served, including a requirement that programs provide virtual home visits only and the extension of transition services for up to 60 days after the end of the emergency declaration. All data are based on families that have completed the program. Therefore, these changes are expected to continue to impact performance on contract measures over the next year and possibly longer.

PROGRAM EQUITY & COVID-19 RECOVERY

- At the direction of the FaDSS Council, the program began concerted efforts to apply an equity lens to service provision with the formation of a FaDSS Equity Committee. All policies and practices are reviewed with an equity lens and focused efforts to engage FaDSS workers in ongoing discussions and learning are being implemented statewide.
- As we continue to realize the impacts of COVID-19 on all Iowans, specific attention is being drawn to the disproportionate impact for low-income, marginalized and other under-served communities. This creates the opportunity to center the voices of families in addressing equitable economic recovery strategies.

NUMBER OF FAMILIES SERVED

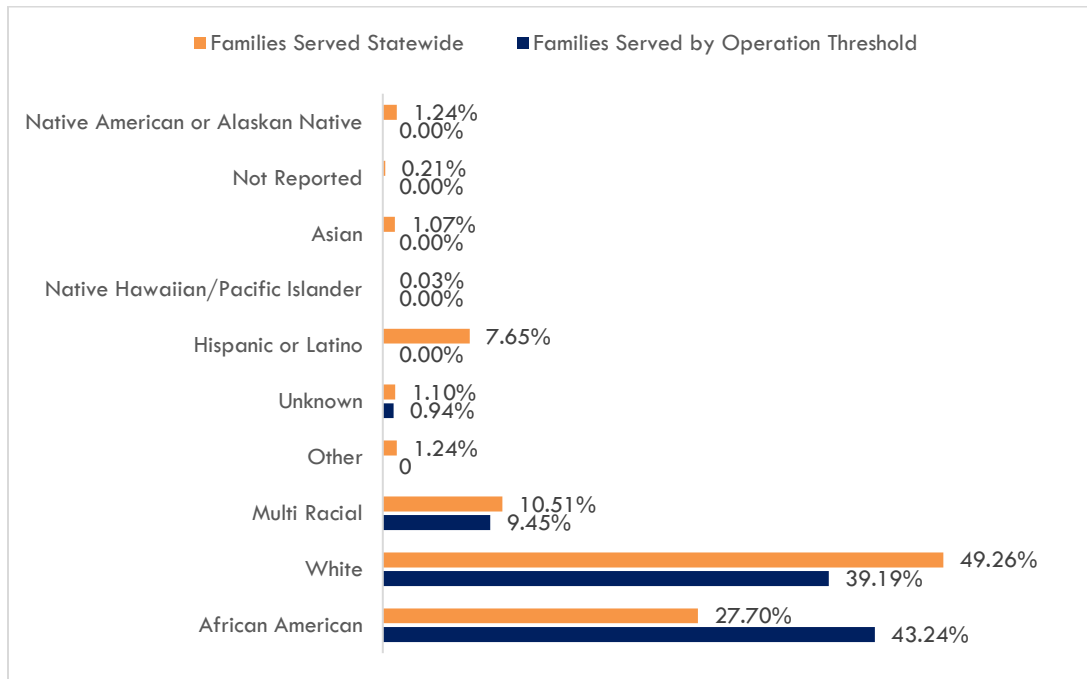
At any point in time, the Operation Threshold FaDSS program may serve 73 families. In Fiscal Year 2021, a total of 117 families received services. 46 families completed or were exited from the program during the reporting period, including 94 children (under the age of 18).

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES SERVED

Demographic information about FaDSS participants is collected at the family (rather than individual) level, though the program often narrows in on characteristics of the designated “Head of Household” to identify and understand trends related to family structure and progress toward self-sufficiency. Overall, ninety-six percent of families are headed by a female; sixty-three percent are headed by an individual aged 24-34. Figure 1 below provides insight into the racial and ethnic composition of FaDSS families served by Operation Threshold. Statewide, families of color are disproportionately represented in the FaDSS program when compared to Iowa’s general population, though the disparity is reflective of the broader representation of families of color in the Family Investment Program (FIP).¹

¹ Source: Iowa Department of Human Services.

Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity of Family Heads of Household



PROGRAM PERFORMANCE – STATE CONTRACT MEASURES

Each quarter, program leadership meet to review performance on contract measures and identify opportunities to improve outcomes for families. The table below presents FY 21 performance for each contract measure, and includes the contract target and state average for comparison.

Table 1. Contract Measures

| Contract Measure | Operation Threshold FY 21 | FY 21 Target | State FY 21 Average |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Families involved in at least one work preparedness activity. | 80% | 70% | 65% |
| Families exiting FaDSS with increased income. | 44% | 45% | 49% |
| Adult family member(s) with a substantiated mental health barrier that accessed treatment. | 79% | 89% | 91% |
| Adult family member(s) with a substantiated substance abuse barrier that accessed treatment. | 0 | 82% | 86% |

Operation Threshold - Family Development and Self-Sufficiency Program

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Families experiencing domestic violence that received help. | 67% | 85% | 85% |
| Employed families with child care issues that have addressed those issues. | 76% | 58% | 50% |
| Families with age eligible children (0-5) co-enrolled in an early childhood program. | 54% | 51% | 44% |
| Families receiving transition services after the last month of FIP. | 52% | 58% | 57% |

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE – LOCAL PROGRAM GOALS

In addition to conducting regular reviews of performance on state contract measures, Operation Threshold leadership set and review performance and outcomes goals unique to the local program. Table 2 provides an overview of these goals and corresponding performance data. State performance data have been included for comparison.

Table 2. Program Goals

| Indicator | Through Quarter 1 | Through Quarter 2 | Through Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 (Year End) | Target | State Average |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------|
| <i>Goal: To successfully engage families in the FaDSS program from enrollment through transition</i> | | | | | | |
| Length of stay | 11.0 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 11.0 | 12.6 |
| Average number of monthly contacts | 3.0 | 2.4 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 3.0 | 4.85 |
| Percentage of families enrolled through 7 months (greater than 6 months) transition | 38% | 37% | 37% | 35% | 28% | 31% |
| <i>Goal: To connect FaDSS families with other community resources/services to help meet their needs.</i> | | | | | | |
| Percent of participants experiencing DV referred to DV programs | 100% | 100% | 100% | 67% | 80% | 61% |
| Percent of participants improving their relationship with their partner (who set a goal) | 0% | 17% | 14% | 13% | 20% | 32% |
| Percent of working families who address their childcare issues | 100% | 83% | 80% | 76% | 60% | 50% |
| Percent of families improving their childcare (who set a goal) | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 30% | 29% |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|------|------------|------------|-----|
| Percent of adult family members with substantiated MH that accessed treatment assisted by FaDSS Specialist | 83% | 100% | 100% | 80% | 90% | 87% |
| Percent of HH demonstrating positive changes to MH (who set a goal) | 14% | 8% | 7% | 6% | 25% | 26% |
| Percent of adult family members with substantiated SA that access treatment assisted by FaDSS Specialist | NA | NA | NA | NA | 90% | 73% |
| Percent of HH demonstrating positive changes in substance abuse (who set a goal) | NA | NA | 0% | 0% | 5% | 12% |
| <i>Goal: To have families successfully exit out of FaDSS and become self-sufficient</i> | | | | | | |
| Percent of families who show an improvement who set an employment related goal | 36% | 32% | 31% | 28% | 40% | 40% |
| Percent of families who are employed at exit | 37% | 33% | 31% | 30% | 45% | 45% |
| Percent of families who increased their income at exit | 63% | 54% | 50% | 44% | 40% | 49% |

THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY MATRIX

Families participating in the FaDSS program often face multiple barriers to self-sufficiency. Through an in-depth assessment process (including both formal and informal assessment), Family Development Specialists work with families to identify areas of strength that are then used to address barriers. The Self-Sufficiency Matrix provides a mechanism for program staff to measure changes in a family's situation from entry (within 60 days of enrollment) to program exit. The Self-Sufficiency Matrix measures family stability across 14 life domains. Answering a series of questions for each family domain, Family Development Specialists rate stability on a scale of 1 through 5 based on his/her observation and assessment.

Table 3. Self-Sufficiency Matrix – Domains

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Housing | 8. Parenting, Nurturing and Attachment |
| 2. Transportation | 9. Child Care |
| 3. Mental Health | 10. Support of Child Development |
| 4. Substance Abuse | 11. Adult Education |
| 5. Health | 12. Language |
| 6. Income | 13. Support Network |
| 7. Employment | 14. Relationship with Partner |

Figure 2. Self-Sufficiency Matrix - Stability Scale

SELF-SUFFICIENCY MATRIX RESULTS

By comparing scores for each life domain at entry and at exit, we gain insight into the cumulative impact of FaDSS services on self-sufficiency and stability measures. For the current reporting period, 44 families had both entry and exit scores². Additional performance data are included in a discussion of select domains to lend both context and supporting information about changes in family stability and self-sufficiency measures.

Table 4 presents changes in pre-/post- Self-Sufficiency Matrix life domains. When interpreting the data below, it is useful to consider several key factors: 1) the average entry score may impact both the average change and the percent of families that saw improvement in a domain. For example, when the average entry score is high, families may not have much room for further improvement. Conversely, when the average entry score is considerably low (i.e. at “Vulnerable”), significant scaffolding of supports may be necessary even to achieve stability, or no change, from entry to exit; 2) While our goal is to leverage FaDSS services to achieve positive outcomes across all life domains, community factors may play a significant role in whether a family achieves improvement. This may be particularly salient for domains such as housing, transportation, and child care. Overall, any review of pre-/post- Self-Sufficiency Matrix changes should include these and other local considerations.

Table 4. Pre-/Post- Changes in Family Stability and Self-Sufficiency Measures

| | Overall Domain Changes – Head of Household | | | | | Targeted Domain Changes ³ - Head of Household | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Domain | Average Entry Score | Average Exit Score | Average Change | Percent Improved | Percent Improved - State | Average Change | Percent Improved | Percent Improved - State |
| Housing | 2.00 | 2.77 | +0.77 | 43% | 29% | +0.97 | 52% | 39% |
| Transportation | 3.66 | 3.86 | +0.20 | 23% | 31% | +0.39 | 39% | 48% |
| Mental Health | 4.07 | 3.93 | -0.14 | 11% | 18% | -0.76 | 6% | 26% |

² The FaDSS program launched a new data collection system, Iowa FaDSS, on July 1, 2016. Self-Sufficiency Matrix data for families that enrolled prior to July 1, 2016 were not migrated from the legacy data collection system. Therefore, for the current reporting period, only families that enrolled after July 1, 2016 and exited by June 30, 2021 could be included in this analysis.

³ Targeted domains are domains for which the specialist and family set one or more goals to address identified barriers.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|-------|------------|-----|-------|-------------|-----|
| Substance Abuse | 4.52 | 4.43 | -0.09 | 5% | 8% | 0 | 0% | 12% |
| Health | 4.11 | 4.14 | +0.02 | 16% | 23% | -0.42 | 8% | 35% |
| Income | 1.80 | 1.86 | +0.07 | 16% | 23% | +0.05 | 16% | 26% |
| Employment | 1.25 | 1.61 | +0.36 | 23% | 34% | +0.44 | 28% | 40% |
| Nurturing and Attachment | 4.27 | 4.32 | +0.05 | 16% | 20% | -0.30 | 0% | 31% |
| Childcare | 3.08 | 3.05 | -0.03 | 11% | 23% | -0.28 | 0% | 29% |
| Support of Child Development | 3.55 | 3.75 | +0.20 | 20% | 25% | +0.29 | 29% | 34% |
| Adult Education | 2.02 | 2.05 | +0.02 | 9% | 11% | +0.11 | 17% | 15% |
| Language | 4.00 | 5.00 | +1.00 | 33% | 14% | +3.00 | 100% | 17% |
| Support Network | 2.57 | 2.73 | +0.16 | 23% | 37% | +0.08 | 36% | 54% |
| Relationship with Partner | 3.20 | 3.23 | +0.03 | 7% | 20% | -0.43 | 12% | 32% |

HOUSING

Taking a deeper look at the housing domain, we can see that as a whole, families entered with an average score of 2.00 “vulnerable.” Seventy percent of families set goals related to their housing situation, meaning that this domain was particularly targeted by both the family and the home visitor for improvement. Families setting goals improved in the housing domain at a slightly higher rate than all families.

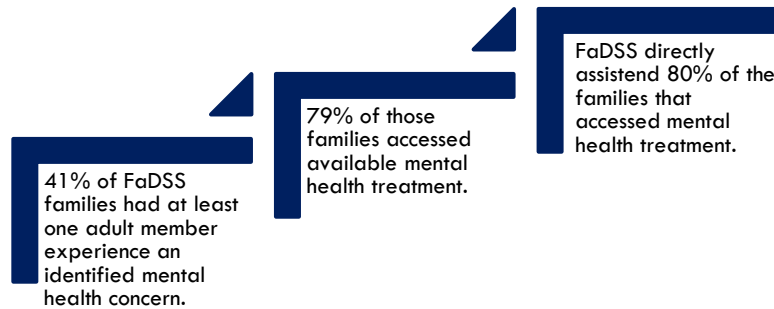
TRANSPORTATION

Families entered the FaDSS program with an average transportation score of 3.66, or between “safe” and “building capacity.” Forty-one percent of families set a goal related to transportation; of those that did, thirty-nine percent showed improvement compared to twenty-three percent of all families.

MENTAL HEALTH

The mental health domain presents a more complex picture of family stability. Families entered the program with an average score of 4.07, in the “building capacity” category. Thirty-nine percent of families set a goal related to addressing mental health needs; for those that did, the average entry score was similar. Overall, the improvement for all families and those that set goals were similar however, families at entry are scoring at a rather high score.

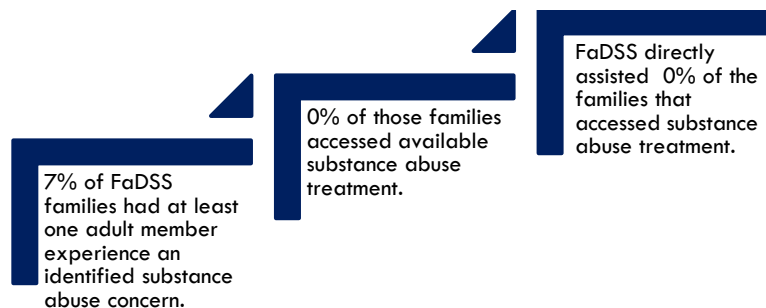
Figure 3: Access to Treatment for Mental Health



SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Similar to mental health, the substance abuse domain can provide useful, though complex insight into family stability. A review of data for this domain demonstrates that families enter the program with an average score of 4.52, in the “building capacity” category. A relatively small percentage of families (less than one percent) chose to set goals for improvement in this domain. Overall, the improvement for all families and those that set goals were similar however, families at entry are scoring at a rather high score. Similar to mental health, scores overall remained steady from enrollment to exit. As with mental health, substance abuse screening may be both formal and informal, and may occur as appropriate at any point during enrollment. It is possible that Family Development Specialists identified the presence of substance abuse concerns after the initial Self-Sufficiency Matrix was administered. As with mental health, the role of the Family Development Specialist is strictly to screen for the presence of substance abuse and connect families to qualified resources and supports.

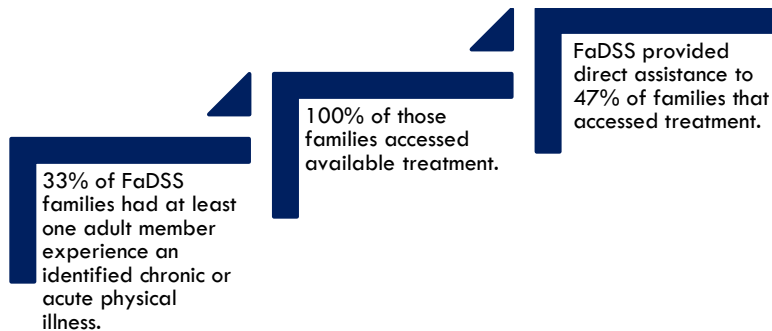
Figure 4: Access to Treatment for Substance Abuse



HEALTH

Families entered the FaDSS program with an average score of 4.11, in the “building capacity” category. Overall, families exited with roughly the same score, at 4.14. Twenty-seven percent of families chose to set a goal for this domain, those families entered at a higher score of 4.50 and actually at exit had a decrease in score (4.08). This could be that specialist discovered health issue after the entry score was assessed. While the FaDSS program measures family progress in this domain, it is generally approached in terms of facilitating family access to appropriate, qualified health professionals.

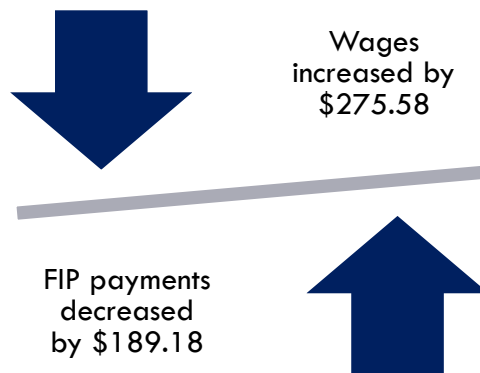
Figure 5: Access to Treatment for Chronic and Acute Physical Illness



INCOME

As might be expected, families tended to enter the FaDSS program with much lower scores in this domain (the average score was 1.80, or “in crisis”). The average score at exit was 1.86; still within the “in crisis” range, though improved over scores at entry. Eighty-six percent of families set income-related goals; of those that did, they achieved similar results than those of all families in this domain. It is worth noting that the income domain is directly related to earned wages. To put this into further context, the “in crisis” category applies to families between 0% and 100% of poverty by family size.

Figure 6: Changes in Monthly FIP and Wages from Entry to Exit



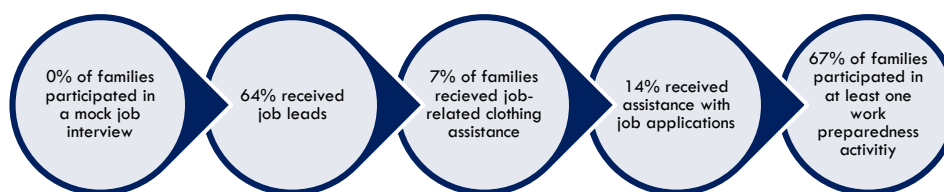
Narrowing in on families employed at exit (thirty percent), we see that the average monthly wage was \$1,199.77 (an increase of \$1,174.85).

EMPLOYMENT

Supporting families as they seek and obtain employment is a cornerstone of the FaDSS model. Families entered the FaDSS program with an average score of 1.25, within the “in crisis” range for the employment domain. At eighty-one percent, this domain had the highest rates of goal setting. Families saw similar levels of improvement regardless of goal setting or not for this domain. The FaDSS program provides a number of

formal and informal supports related to employment. Figure 7 below provides a detailed look at these activities.

Figure 7: Job Preparedness Activities



At entry, seven percent of families were employed; by exit, thirty percent had achieved employment. Reviewing family progress for both the employment and income domains together, it is clear that FaDSS is effective in supporting families to obtain employment, though improvements in income suggest that overall wages earned remain lower.

PARENTING, NURTURING AND ATTACHMENT

Families enrolling in FaDSS tended to score relatively high in the parenting, nurturing and attachment domain. With an average incoming score of 4.27, parents were generally considered “building capacity” in terms of their parenting ability and relationship with their children. Overall, twenty-three percent of families set a goal related to this domain. When this domain was targeted, families tended to see slight decrease in scores at exit (similarly, scores were relatively stable for families overall). The FaDSS program, unlike many family support programs, may provide support to families even when child safety comes to the attention of child protective services. Of families completing the FaDSS program in Fiscal Year 2021, seven percent had an active child abuse case at some point during their enrollment.

CHILD CARE

This domain applied to eighty-four percent of families, meaning that they had a child that would require child care. However, access to child care is often a significant barrier to employment and self-sufficiency for families with young children. The average score at entry was 3.08, in the “safe” category. Thirty-two percent of families for whom this domain applied set a goal related to child care; of those that did, entry scores averaged 3.07. Overall, families that set goals and all families decrease slightly at exit. FaDSS was able to provide direct assistance in obtaining child care to seventy-six percent of employed families for whom this was a barrier.

SUPPORT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The average score at entry was 3.55, between “safe” and “building capacity.” Thirty-two percent of families set a goal related to child development; of those that did, entry scores averaged 3.00. Families that targeted this domain achieved improvement at higher rates than that of all families. It should be noted, the FaDSS program engages families in formal screening for developmental delays for all children ages 0-3. Using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3 and/or ASQ SE: 2), the FaDSS program conducted screening with sixty percent of families with an age-eligible child (twenty-six percent of children screened were identified as

positive for a developmental delay). Overall, fifty-seven of families with age-eligible children also participated in an early childhood program.

ADULT EDUCATION

For families enrolling in FaDSS, the average score for adult education was 2.02, in the “vulnerable” category. For this domain, it is worth noting that a score of 2 indicates that the head of household has achieved either a high school equivalency diploma or has graduated from high school; a score of 3 indicates that the head of household attends college, community college, or a job/technical training program. Forty-one percent of families set a formal goal for this domain. Overall, nine percent of adult heads of household improved their level of educational attainment. For those families that set education goal there was a seventeen percent improvement.

LANGUAGE

The language domain measures changes in literacy for a family’s native language and progress toward bilingual fluency. This domain is not completed for English-speaking adult family members; less than one percent of families were scored for changes in language. Overall, the data available for this domain are insufficient for analysis.

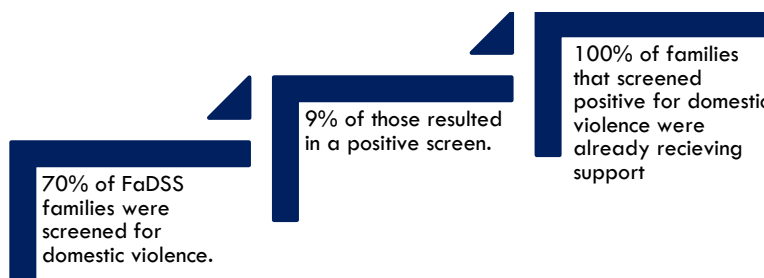
SUPPORT NETWORK

This domain measures family access to both formal (i.e. social service programs) and informal (i.e. family and friends) supports. The average score at entry for this domain was 2.57, between “vulnerable” and “safe.” Thirty-two percent of families set a goal related to their support network; families that targeted this domain achieved greater improvement than families that did not set a formal goal.

RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTNER

As with the child care and language domains, the relationship domain considers a smaller number of families for changes from entry to exit. This domain is completed for heads of household based on current and past relationships (within six months prior to completion of the entry Self-Sufficiency Matrix). For the current reporting period, data for this domain are available for sixty-eight percent of families with Self-Sufficiency Matrix scores. At entry, families averaged a score of 3.20, in the “safe” category. Exit scores averaged slightly higher for all families (3.23). Eighteen percent of families set a formal goal related to this domain; those that did entered the program with a lower score than all families (2.57). The FaDSS program engages families in formal screening for domestic violence within the first ninety days of enrollment. Figure 8 below provides an overview of screening activities completed in Fiscal Year 21.

Figure 8: Screening for Domestic Violence



CONCLUSION

The Operation Threshold FaDSS program works diligently to provide high-quality, supportive services to families participating in the Family Investment Program. The data presented above reflect the program's commitment to achieving improved outcomes for parents, children, and families as a whole.